1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

Tiklauila" or "My wife is a Munupula woman"; a mourner would say, "He died when visiting the Munupula and therefore we will have to go to Munupi for the funeral"; an old man would reminisce about being brought up as a youth by his mother's brother, who was a Turupula, and the good times he had in Turupi; and another would recount details of big battles between the Munupula and the Malauila. All of these were band names or band territories. The nine bands thus acted, psychologically, as small tribelets or semisovereign groups, since it was with one of them that every Tiwi most closely identified in his day-to-day life on the islands. It is only when, as nowadays, he leaves the islands to go to work for the white man in Darwin that he has to think of himself as a Tiwi, since there he mingles with men of other tribes. Even then, work and residence in the white man's town does not entirely obliterate band identification. A Tiklauila in Darwin prefers to work with and to consort in the evenings with other Tiklauila, and Malauila with Malauila.[8]

Because of certain peculiar features of Tiwi domestic life, to be discussed below, it is difficult to sum up the Tiwi band in any simple formula. People, especially women, changed their band residence frequently in the course of their lives, and being born into a band did not at all require permanent residence with that band, either for males or for females. Thus the district (for example, Tiklaru or Malau) was a firm, fixed, known quantity, but the people who "owned" the district (for example, Tiklauila or Malauila) were a flexible and constantly shifting collection of individuals.

The territorial boundaries between bands were clear and well known to everybody, though they were not the sharp lines on a map such as we regard as essential for a frontier or a land boundary. All pieces of country—clumps of jungle, stretches of grassland, sections of thick woods—had names. One such piece of country, say a thickly wooded area, belonged to one band, while the more open country that began where the woods thinned out belonged to another; thus the boundary was not a sharp line but a transitional zone—perhaps of several miles—where the change from trees to open savannah became noticeable, with the band territories thus fusing into one another rather than being separated by sharp lines. The Tiwi, so to speak, thought of the landscape as a sort of spectrum where a man moved gradually out of one district into another as he passed from one type of horizon to the next. Since rivers, and even Apsley Strait, a very narrow arm of the sea separating Melville from Bathurst Island, usually have similar types of vegetation on *both* sides or banks, none of the island rivers nor Apsley Strait was a boundary or frontier between bands. The Mandiimbula, predominantly a Melville Island

[8] In the early 1930's the situation at the Government Hospital in Darwin offered a good illustration of this. The hospital authorities said they gave preference for house-boy jobs to "Melville Islanders because of their greater intelligence and reliability." In point of fact, some of the younger Tiklauila had established a monopoly on hospital jobs and no Tiwi other than a Tiklauila was ever hired there. The whites thought they were hiring Tiwi but the Tiklauila saw to it that they hired only Tiklauila and felt no vestige of obligation to other Tiwi to help them get these desirable jobs. The alleged greater intelligence of the islanders was undoubtedly due to the fact that the Tiklauila, having had a Catholic mission in their territory since 1911, were more used to white requirements.

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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2

Life in the Bush

Organization: Band and Household

THE PRECEDING CHAPTER should convey something of what a Tiwi band really was. The casual way in which people left one band and joined another shows that the band was in no sense a tight political or legal group. Old men preferred, on the whole, to bestow their daughters on men in other bands, but far from this indicating any tendency towards patrilocality, there was at the same time a strong tendency on the part of such selected sons-in-law, especially if they were young and mobile, to move into the band of the father-in-law, partly, at least, to ensure that the donor did not change his mind. Even the faint prospect of a wife was sufficient to cause young men to change bands, and change of band residence by senior men was not at all rare.

The emphasis on widow remarriage was another factor that influenced band residence and made the whole matter of band affiliation extremely fluid and arbitrary. For widow remarriage not only caused elderly women to move perhaps several times in their lifetimes, but also caused their younger sons to move with them. Such unmarried sons preferred home cooking and followed their elderly mothers outside the band if remarriage required the widows to move. Almost invariably the question "Why is So and So (a youth of 15-25) living in Turupi if he is really a Malauila?" evoked the response (obvious to a Tiwi) "Because his mother is there." Conversely, mothers often followed their sons, especially when the son began to acquire young wives who needed senior female supervision. Such mothers divided their time between the household of the son (or even several sons) and the household of the nominal husband, and if such part-time residence in two (or more) households involved part-time residence in two (or more) bands, the arrangement did not provoke any comment, nor was it thought to be in any way odd.

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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The Beginning of Tiwi Careers

The Malauila in 1928-29 consisted of forty-nine males and sixty females of all ages. The males were divided into the following age groups:

20 years and below	28
between 21 and 30	7
between 31 and 42	7
between 43 and 55	4
over 55	3
Total	49

Of the twenty-eight males aged 20 or below, none had a wife of any kind, and none of them expected or were expected to have one. This group comprised the male children—boys and youths—and such males were of no importance whatever in the Tiwi scheme of things. They lived in the households of older men and were ignored by the male elders.

The next group, the seven men between 21 and 30, was the group of young men whom the elders were just beginning to take seriously. The younger of them were almost indistinguishable from the "youths," while the older of them were beginning to be watched by the seniors with some interest. Of the seven, six were neither married to a wife of any sort nor promised a wife. One, called Banana by the whites, was a man of about 28 and married to an ancient crone who was childless by three previous husbands, but she was in the category of "disputed" wife since her young husband had only been able to acquire and hold her because of abnormal circumstances arising from the presence of white buffalo-hunters on Melville Island some years previously. Under pre-white conditions, none of the seven men under 30 would have had a wife of any kind.

The years between 30 and 40 were the crucial years for Tiwi men in their establishment of households and careers. It was during this period that men normally married their first ancient widows and the "likely to be successful" became sorted out from the less-likely. As they passed into their thirties, men were allowed to enter for the first time into the influence game and, as the most junior players, they entered it by becoming subordinates and satellites of the bigger and more senior players, or by making alliances among themselves so as to pool their small individual assets.

In this age group in 1928-29, there were seven Malauila men ranging in age from around 31 to 42. One (Tiberun) was still unmarried and unpromised. He was thus (at age about 33) the oldest bachelor in the band. Not unnaturally he spent a good deal of time with other bands or at the Mission in the hope that his failure to get started in Malau might be remedied by elders of other bands or even by the priests. Tiberun was an older full brother of Banana, the 28-year-old married irregularly to a woman whom he had "stolen." A glance at their family tree revealed one potent reason why Tiberun

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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Some years later, when Boya had reached a reasonable age like 30, Ki-in-kumi had arranged for him to marry a very ancient and childless widow (*palimaringa*) more than twenty years older than himself. This was all that Ki-in-kumi considered he needed to do for his step-son, and in Tiwi terms it was almost a gesture of contempt and an open indication that Ki-in-kumi, by providing him with an old woman who was childless but could cook, was not interested in helping Boya toward a career. Since the joining up of Boya to the crone took place shortly after the death of Boya's mother, who had lived with her sons in Ki-in-kumi's household, Ki-in-kumi by producing the old widow for Boya was telling him in effect to get out and start his own household now that his mother was dead.

In 1928 we found Boya aged about 42 married to the crone of 65. But he, she, and Boya's younger brother of 24 were still living in Ki-in-kumi's household. Ki-in-kumi's detestation of him was notorious and yet Boya had by now no less than four young bestowed child-wives growing up elsewhere. No one of these bestowals had come from Malau but were bestowals from different fathers of baby girls in other bands. At first sight this presented a curious situation. Within his own band Boya appeared a complete failure, suffering so severely from Ki-in-kumi's hostility that he had received no bestowals and at age 42 did not even have a separate household of his own. But how could this judgment be squared with the four bestowals from elders of other bands? Clearly none of the causes of success so far analyzed fitted the case of Boya.

Further research into who lived with whom as distinct from who was married to whom revealed that not only was "the household" of Boya, his elderly wife, and his younger brother an integral part of the Ki-in-kumi "establishment," but also that Padimo with his "household" was part of that establishment. Padimo, like Boya, had one elderly wife but he also had five bestowed wives, all daughters of Ki-in-kumi. We said above that the two eldest of these five girls being now aged 20 and 17 respectively were in residence with their husband, while the three youngest, not having reached puberty, were still "with their father." Actual observation showed that this was an academic distinction, since the households of Padimo, the son-in-law, and Ki-in-kumi, the father-in-law, were parts of the same establishment. When one of Ki-in-kumi's daughters bestowed on Padimo became old enough to "leave her father and join her husband," she did not have to move her residence or even change her daily work routines. She merely sat at night around the campfire of her older sisters (Padimo's wives) instead of around the campfire of her younger sisters (Ki-in-kumi's daughters). She remained part of the same establishment.

Padimo, it will be remembered, was the young man whom Ki-in-kumi had attracted from Rangu to Malau by liberally bestowing him with child-wives. Padimo had thus moved into the northern band and by 1928 had moved right into Ki-in-kumi's camp, where he functioned as a sort of executive officer and heir apparent to the old man. In the same camp, though in a very different capacity, was Boya, the 42-year-old despised step-son. Many roads thus led to Ki-in-kumi's household, but before discussing the large establishment

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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sister's son being initiated, the attitude of a Tiwi toward the whole *pukimani* state was essentially a passive attitude. *Pukimani* behavior was something one accepted and conformed to when required; it was in no way an active attempt to change nature, people, food, gods, spirits, or anything else in the universe. It is therefore not unreasonable to conclude that since their *pukimani* system offered them no handle by which to seek actively to alter the universe in which they lived, the Tiwi found that universe to their liking as it was. Unlike the tribes of central Australia who lavished a lot of thought upon magical methods of improving the food supply or the rainfall, the Tiwi believed and acted on the belief that as long as they observed their *pukimani* taboos, the food would continue to be as abundant and the rains as regular as they had always been. The central Australians, by seeking to coerce nature through magic, suggest that they found nature unsatisfactory; the Tiwi, by relying upon passive taboo-observance alone, suggest rather that their relationship to nature was an acceptable equilibrium that they wanted to preserve, not change. And if everybody observed his *pukimani* taboos when required, that equilibrium would remain undisturbed. Hence the antisocial man in Tiwi was not the maker of individual magic (he was unknown, anyway) but the nonobserver of taboo. By his nonobservance he threatened to upset the normally satisfactory equilibrium between man and nature. For a senior Tiwi male to be charged publicly with breaking *pukimani* rules was a disgrace and a blow to his prestige and his position in public opinion. His behavior was possibly a sin against the spirits but it was certainly a shame in the eyes of his fellows. *Pukimani* observance was thus a matter of respectability to a much greater degree than it was a matter of pleasing the spirits.

DEATH As was mentioned above, death is the natural phenomenon around which the Tiwi had woven their most elaborate web of ritual. The most frequent and most important Tiwi ceremonies were the mourning ceremonies, and they came in three sizes—small, medium, and large—depending on the age, sex, and importance of the dead person. The mourning ceremonies which drew the crowds were not held until some time after the death and burial. All bodies of dead persons were buried within twenty-four hours of their death by digging a hole near the camp where the death had occurred and placing the body, wrapped in bark, in it. Near most well-used camping spots there was already a graveyard marked by old graveposts, and the latest corpse was buried there or near there. Seldom was the body carried any distance for burial. If a person died even less than a mile from an old burial ground, there was little inclination to carry the body that far. He would be buried, instead, within perhaps a hundred yards of where he died. This had certain awkward repercussions for social organization, since occasionally a person died while away from his home district and, being buried where he died, his ceremonies were held and his posts erected in a district in which his immediate family did not live. Young men often used this to validate a change of residence, giving as their reason for living in a band territory in which they had not grown up, the location there of their father's graveposts.

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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from their future sons-in-law and demands which look very much like bride price and bride service developed as a basis for marriage arrangement. A young girl had a relatively "free choice" of her future spouse. But following this selection, her father let it be known to the young man what he expected. The desired payment was often stated in Australian money by the 1950's; some men were asking as much as a hundred pounds for a daughter. (This was a very high sum, since Tiwi males working for the Army received four pounds a week as normal wages.) Other men were asking that their sons-in-law live with them, thus leaving their own parental home, and contribute regularly to the upkeep of the household of the father-in-law. This was, indeed, quite a practical arrangement, for when such a young man went to work in Darwin his wife had to be supervised at home and, further, his employer was supposed to send home to the Mission part of the young man's wages.

Thus, by 1954, the following type of marriage agreement was initiated by the great majority of Tiwi with marriageable daughters, specifically those who centered their activities at Bathurst Island Mission and Garden Point. A young girl chose her future husband from her single, male agemates, sometimes with a suggestion from her father. Her father informed his future son-in-law of the obligations incumbent upon him, which normally included matrilocal postmarital residence and a bride price. An older woman with children, or even one without any offspring, who became a widow, was discouraged from remarrying by her father, if he survived, and by her brother after her father's death. The father or eldest brother of a widow with a daughter reaped the benefits of allowing that daughter to marry the young man whom she desired. The widow herself did not remarry but stayed in the household of her father or brother.

Residence Patterns

By 1933, traditional Tiwi residence patterns had undergone major modifications, some of which have already been mentioned. The old residence areas of the bands had been depopulated; in fact, nearly all the Tiwi were located around one of four European establishments—those at Darwin, Bathurst Island Mission, Garden Point, or Snake Bay. In each of these areas a centralized village pattern had developed. Within the Tiwi communities at Snake Bay, Garden Point, and Bathurst Island Mission there remained a few of the old large households with a polygamous base. But in all these camps the household heads were well past sixty and in most cases past seventy. Polygamous households were dying out by 1933.

But what was replacing them? One might assume that the European pattern of the single family household based upon neolocal residence would have emerged as the new Tiwi system. This was not the case, however. Just as Hart found in 1928-29 that successful Tiwi men were the heads of large establishments, so in 1953-54 the younger male leaders had gathered around

3: Hart E-5 (1928-1929) 1930 OI20 Tiwi OI20

period is the prelude to the complete lapsing of the title to the district. The prominent part played in this institution by the father's father and the fact that most of the present districts held on such a title are held from the father's father whereas comparatively few are held through an ancestor (necessarily more remote) who has been forgotten, seems to indicate that *yirt' amini* holdings do not last more than three generations before they lapse for want of sufficient able-bodied men to enforce them.

It must not be imagined that the whole of Melville and Bathurst Islands are divided into such holdings nor indeed that everyone in the tribe belongs to such a group. The main obstacle to this lies in the self-evident fact that if one's father's father dies in the territory of another horde, as must have quite frequently have happened in the days of marauding expeditions between hordes, there can be no such thing as a *yirt' amini* holding of the district wherein he died. Moreover there are numbers of the Tiwi whose fathers and grandfathers died young, and the essence of the system is that the grandfather should have been old enough to have sufficient male children and grandchildren to enforce the claim.

It can easily be seen from the above how it comes about that each horde has a number of names, since each one of the *yirt' amini* group-names is liable to be applied to the whole horde merely by adding *-ila* or *-ula* to the name of the district they control.

Spencer's list of horde names is at variance with mine, because he did not realize this. Out of six men of the *Tiklauwila*, one might easily get six different answers to his question as to their "country," each giving the name of his *yirt' amini* group. It is quite possible that the horde names that are used here—*Tiklauwila*, *Munupula*, etc.—are really *yirt' amini* names that have become extended to include a whole horde either by the identification of a very powerful *yirt' amini* group with a horde in the eyes of the rest of the tribe or by the former horde name becoming tabu and a *yirt' amini* name being substituted. This view is strengthened by the fact that in one or two of the hordes, the horde name is still in use as the name of a district. Thus whereas the whole of the territory of the *Wilraŋgwila* on the north of Melville is technically *Wilraŋgu*, the native name for Karslake Island, a small portion of that territory, is *Wilraŋgu*. Similarly *Malau* is a creek in the territory of the *Malauila* horde.

A man is born into the horde of his father. Should his father die and his mother be taken by a member of another horde he goes with her, and WHILE THE WOMAN WILL ALWAYS BE LOOKED UPON AS BELONGING TO HER FORMER HORDE, THE CHILD CHANGES HIS, TAKING THAT OF HIS STEPFATHER.

3: Hart E-5 (1928-1929) 1930 OI20 Tiwi OI20

591 621 [882] while the woman will always be looked upon as belonging to her former horde, the child changes his, taking that of his step-father. Very often when a boy is aged about 14 or 15 he is taken by his mother's brother of another horde to live with that horde for some years. Often he is initiated there and not quite so often he will spend the rest of his life there. It is no uncommon occurrence for a man to have spent his adolescent years in two or three different hordes in addition to the one into which he was born, always under the supervision of one or other of his classificatory mother's brothers. Two cases at least occurred in the last few years of young unmarried men who had been reared and initiated in one horde leaving that horde of their own free will and going to live permanently in another because they considered they had there more chance of obtaining a wife.[8]

On the other hand, a woman will usually be looked upon as belonging to the same horde all her life, even though she marries young and goes to live with another horde. To the tribe at large such a woman is for example a *Tiklawila*, though she has lived with the *Yeimpi* ever since her marriage, and her *Tiklawila* origin will never be forgotten.

As a result of these conflicting customs it is difficult to lay down any definite rule in regard to membership of the horde. The best generalization is perhaps to say that a woman retains all her life a connection with the horde into which she is born no matter where patrilocal marriage may lead her, while a man on the other hand belongs to whatever horde he is living with at the moment, this being normally but not at all invariably his father's horde.

TOTEMISM

614 The Tiwi have a system of matrilineal totemic clans. Each clan has a special relation to one or sometimes to two and in two instances to three species of natural objects. The members of the clan have a solidarity of their own, helping each other in tribal fights, speaking of each other as "brother" despite the variation in their actual blood relationship, and not marrying women of their own totem. There are, 101 614 however, few of the distinctive features of Australian totemism as known 771 from other parts of the continent. They eat their totem without any

[8] It was hardly a logical proceeding as one left the *Tiklawila* for the *Mumpala* and the other (quite independently) left the *Mumpala* for the *Tiklawila*.

10:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1962 OI20 Tiwi OI20

pected to help him. If a man has married a woman in his father's matrisib, then his father and his children will be in the same sib. Since only a dead father can so help his son, we have here an expression of the unity and mutual support of a sib and its members in the previous life and the afterlife as well as in the present life. It is important, I believe, to add here that the Tiwi do not believe in reincarnation.

It is interesting to speculate, on the basis of the above, what happens if a man marries women of different sibs. If his mother has also married men of different sibs, Ego will have "fathers" in different sibs to help him find children for his various wives.

Thus, as far as sib exchange is concerned, the Tiwi marriage system is a symmetrical one. When we consider the entire social system of the Tiwi, we see a tendency toward atomism. There are 22 matrisibs, grouped today into five exogamous phratries. Sib membership in phratries is subject to change (Pilling 1957), and the phratries themselves have segmented twice since Hart's visit in 1929. We consequently cannot consider the phratries as stable units in the social organization, and indeed the Tiwi themselves do not. If all marriages were correctly arranged as exchanges between two sibs, we would have eleven independent and symmetrical marriage systems. When this possibility is considered in relation to the data on Tiwi local organization, the potentialities for further symmetry and atomism are quite evident.

Exchange Between Local Groups

There are ten major land divisions on Melville and Bathurst Islands, called by the Tiwi *tungarima* or "countries." Rights to the land of the *tungarima* are determined, for both males and females, by the location of the grave of one's father, and there is a marked preference for patrilocal residence. The *tungarima* are, in themselves, agamous. They are, however, subdivided into smaller districts, each inhabited either by a single large patrilocal extended family or by a group of closely related smaller households. Since incest regulations dictate that extended families are exogamous, we may consider that in many cases, if not all, the local group will also be exogamous.

Unilateral Type A marriage contracts will therefore involve a minimum of three such households or local groups. But the marriage system might still be symmetrical within the *tungarima* or country organization, and the total effect might be to localize the matrisibs in pairs. Each country could then be considered as comprising an independent marriage system. The *tungarima* do reveal marked political, economic, and ceremonial independence, but at least today the matrisibs are not localized. The mythology on the origin of the sibs (Mountford 1958), however, strongly indicates that they were at one time conceived as being localized, and this would account for the stated existence of local spirit-child centers with sib affiliations